

EFFECTIVE

May 1, 2023.

Subject(s)

FOM 722-03B, Relative Engagement and Placement.

Scope

Within this policy there are items that require director approval. Approval from the county director, designated child welfare director, or private agency child welfare director is required for all counties with the exception of Wayne County. In Wayne County, the district manager can approve in place of the county director.

Reason: Children's Services Administration (CSA) recommendation.

Definition of a relative

"Relative" means an individual who is at least 18 years of age and is any of the following:

1. Related to the child within the fifth degree by blood, marriage, or adoption, as grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, aunt or uncle, great-aunt or great-uncle, great-great-aunt or great-great-uncle, sibling, stepsibling, nephew or niece, first cousin or first cousin once removed, and the spouse of any of the above, even after the marriage has ended by death or divorce.

Note: Step relationships for the relationship types listed above are included as relatives for placement purposes.

2. A stepparent, ex-stepparent, **or** the parent who shares custody of a half-sibling is considered a relative for the purpose of placement.
3. The parent of a man whom the court has found probable cause to believe is the putative father if there is no man with legally established rights to the child. A placement with the parent of a putative father is not to be construed as a finding of paternity or to confer legal standing on the putative father. MCL 712A.13a(1)(j).
4. Not related to a child within the fifth degree by blood, marriage, or adoption but who has a strong positive emotional tie or role

in the child's life or the child's parents' life if the child is an infant, as determined by the department or, if the child is an Indian child, as determined solely by the Indian child's tribe. As used in this section, "Indian child" and "Indian child's tribe" mean those terms as defined in section 3 of chapter XIIB; see [NAA 215, Placement/Replacement Priorities for Indian Child\(ren\)](#).

Note: Placements made with an unrelated caregiver cannot be changed to a relative placement while the child is in their home.

Note: A putative or presumed father is not considered a relative and would be considered an *Unrelated Caregiver*; see [FOM 722-03 Placement Selection and Standards](#). The identification of a putative or presumed father goes beyond a strong positive emotional tie. Due diligence is required to establish an individual as the legal father.

Reason: Statutory updates to MCL 712A.13a(1)(j).

Diligent Search and Notification Process

Adherence to deadlines and documentation requirements are crucial to fully implementing the preference for relative foster care placement in effect during the 90 days following removal of a child from parental custody; see [FOM 722-03 Placement Selection and Standards](#).

Reason: Office of Children's Ombudsman and CSA Recommendation.

Relative Placements

Caseworkers must complete a MDHHS-5770 Relative Placement Safety Screen for **all** adult relatives who express an interest in placement, within five business days of the relative's written or verbal request for placement consideration. Verbal requests must be documented in a social work contact.

Reason: CSA recommendation.

Relative Placement Preference

When multiple relatives have been identified for placement, preference shall be given to an adult related to the child within the fifth degree by blood, marriage, or adoption provided they meet all relevant state child protection standards. Placement with a relative

not related by blood, marriage, or adoption can be made if "good cause" is shown. "Good cause" means any of the following:

- A request by 1 or both of the child's parents to deviate from this preference.
- The child's request, if the child is of sufficient age and capacity to understand the decision that is being made.
- The presence of a sibling attachment that can be maintained through a particular placement.
- The child's physical, mental, or emotional needs, such as specialized treatment services that may be unavailable in the community where families who meet the placement preferences live.
- The distance between the child's home and the proposed family placement would frustrate the reunification goal or otherwise impede permanency.

Note: *Relative Placement Preference* does not apply to an Indian child as placement decisions are determined solely by the Indian child's tribe. "Indian child" and "Indian child's tribe" mean those terms as defined in section 3 of chapter XIIB; see [NAA 215, Placement/Replacement Priorities for Indian Child\(ren\)](#).

Reason: Statutory updates to MCL.722.954a.

Maintaining Contact when Placement is Not an Option

Relatives who are not considered for placement are encouraged to maintain contact in other ways, which include but are not limited to:

- Supervising parenting time.
- Transporting the child to appointments, visitation, etc.
- Attending school programs, athletic events, etc.
- Visits, phone calls, and letters.
- Providing childcare or respite.

Reason: CSA recommendation.

Out-of-State Relative Home Study Requests

If placement is denied by the agency with case management but approved or denied by the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) receiving state then a DHS-31, Foster Care

Placement Decision Notice, must be provided to the relative, with a copy of the out-of-state assessment **within five business days of the denial**. Caseworkers must complete a social work contact in the electronic case record documenting the DHS-31, Foster Care Placement Decision Notice, and out of state assessment were provided to the relative.

Reason: CSA recommendation.

CPS Investigations

If a current relative caregiver is investigated by CPS, a DHS-3130A, Relative Placement Home Study, addendum must be completed when the investigation concludes. Director approval is required if the caregiver is confirmed as a perpetrator in the CPS investigation.

Reason: CSA recommendation.

Parent(s) Residing in Relative Home

Note: Completion of a DHS-3130A is not required if the caregiver has an approved and valid DHS-3130A completed prior to the parent on central registry residing in the home. In those instances, only a MDHHS-5770 is required. This would be considered the MDHHS-5770 safety screen type of *New Household Member*.

Reason: CSA clarification.

Good Moral Character Convictions

Note: Emergency placement can be made based on the results of the MDHHS-5770 with director approval.

Reason: CSA clarification.

Documentation

Verification documents should include the date the clearance was checked.

Reason: CSA clarification.

Relative Placement Safety Screen

Note: The home visit must be completed no more than 30 calendar days before the child's placement to be compliant.

Reason: CSA Clarification.

Responsibility for Completion

CPS or a designated worker is required to complete and approve the MDHHS-5770 for initial placements.

Reason: CSA recommendation

Emergency Placement

A supervisor is required to review and approve the DHS-3130A in the electronic case management system within 14 calendar days after the date the home study was completed.

Reason: CSA clarification.

Subsequent or Planned Placement

A supervisor is required to review and approve the DHS-3130A in the electronic case management system within 14 calendar days after the date the home study was completed but **prior** to the placement.

Note: For subsequent or planned placements, the DHS-3130A is required to be worker routed and supervisor approved prior to the placement. This means if the worker routes to their supervisor less than 14 days before the child changes placement the supervisor will not have a full 14 days to approve.

Reason: CSA and Division of Continuous Quality Improvement (DCQI) recommendation.

Approved Placement Recommendation

If the placement recommendation on the DHS-3130A is approved, the child must be placed with the relative. All placement change criteria must be followed; see [FOM 722-3D, Placement Change](#).

Reason: CSA clarification.

Annual Review

The DHS-3130A **including all clearances** must be completed by the worker annually (within 365 days of the previous DHS-3130A completion date) for unlicensed caregivers.

Clearances must be completed no more than 30 calendar days before the completion date. The supervisor must review and approve the DHS-3130A within 14 calendar days after the date it

was completed. **An approved DHS-3130A is valid for 365 days and will expire 365 days from the completion date.**

Note: The day after the worker routes to the supervisor is considered day 1.

Director approval is required when completing an annual assessment with a caregiver who has a good moral character conviction; see *Relative Placement Home Study* in this policy item.

Reason: CSA and DCQI recommendation.

Changes in an Approved Caregiver's Household

An approved DHS-3130A is valid for 365 days. The DHS-3130A will expire 365 days after the date it was completed, a new DHS-3130A **is not required** when:

- A new child in foster care is placed in the caregiver's home during the year.
- A child in foster care is placed with the caregiver and subsequently changes placement (for example, returns home) but returns to the caregiver's home during the year.
- A new household member is added during the year.
- The caregiver moves to a new residence during the year.

For these situations, caseworkers must reassess the placement using the MDHHS-5770. The MDHHS-5770 **including all clearances** must be reviewed and approved prior to, but no more than 30 calendar days before placement of a new foster child in the home, a child returns to this home after another placement, or when a new household member is added. If the caregiver moves to a new residence during the year the MDHHS-5770 must be completed as soon as possible within 30 calendar days of the move to ensure safety criteria continue to be met.

Reason: CSA recommendation and clarification.

Behavior Management

Each child will have an individualized behavior management plan and corporal punishment is prohibited for children in foster care. Corporal punishment means hitting, paddling, shaking, slapping, spanking, or any other use of physical force as a means of behavior

management. Caregivers may use reasonable restraint to prevent a child from harming themselves, other persons, or to prevent serious property damage.

Discipline and child-handling techniques are to be recorded in the *Parent-Agency Treatment Plan and Service Agreement, under Foster Parent/Relative/Unrelated Caregiver Activities*; see [FOM 722-08D Treatment Plans](#).

If an unlicensed caregiver is confirmed to have used corporal punishment on a child in foster care the caseworker must reassess the placement by completing a DHS-3130A addendum. The worker must complete the *Behavior Management Assessment* and document the caregiver's agreement to follow the behavior management plan and refrain from using corporal punishment. This includes having the caregiver describe behaviors that require intervention and how they will intervene/handle these behaviors.

The addendum must be worker completed and supervisor approved within 14 calendar days of the date corporal punishment is confirmed.

Reason: CSA recommendation.

Family Incentive Grant

Policy on the Family Incentive Grant (FIG), a grant for home improvement purchases or services required to meet Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL), licensing standards or to address safety concerns to maintain placement, can be found in [FOM 980, Family Incentive Grant](#).

Reason: CSA recommendation.

**MANUAL
MAINTENANCE
INSTRUCTIONS**

Changed Items ...

[FOM 722-03B](#)